

## ***PRESS RELEASE***

---



Contact: Murray J. Haberman  
Acting Executive Director  
California Postsecondary Education Commission  
1303 J Street, Suite 500  
Sacramento, California 95814-2938  
(916) 445-1000  
mhaberman@cpec.ca.gov

### **Commission Releases University Eligibility Study**

*May 19, 2004*—Sacramento—The California Postsecondary Education Commission released its University Eligibility Study today, indicating that 28.8% of the public high school graduating class of 2003 was eligible for admission to the California State University and 14.4% percent was eligible for the University of California.

The Commission, the California State University, and the University of California jointly conduct these studies so that the university systems and state policy makers can see if admission requirements are consistent with the state's 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education. The Master Plan recommends that CSU take its freshmen from the top 33.3% of California public high school graduates and UC take its freshmen from the top 12.5% of graduates.

Since 1983, the Commission has conducted five eligibility studies, with the most recent in 1996. For the 2003 graduating class, eligibility for CSU was about the same as it was for the 1996 graduating class. However, the eligibility rate for UC has increased.

A total of 335,700 students graduated from California public high schools in 2003. Of these, an estimated 96,700 were eligible for CSU and 48,400 were eligible for UC.

"The Eligibility Study is critically important as it informs policy makers on the extent to which our public high school graduates are readying themselves for our state's public universities," said Howard Welinsky, Chair of the Commission. "It is clear that more of our disadvantaged students are eligible, but more progress in the area of academic preparation is needed."

"We are pleased that more students are taking the courses and college entrance exams that are necessary to qualify to enter the nation's most prestigious public universities," added Murray J. Haberman, the Commission's Acting Executive Director. "Finding ways of accommodating these students will present some challenges, particularly when the state budget is stretched so tightly. But it is essential that we find ways of giving all qualified students the opportunities to attend our public universities."

*more*

As in previous studies, the results show substantial differences between racial and ethnic groups. Eligibility rates for African American and Latino graduates have improved since 1996, but are still well below the rates for Whites and Asians. The UC eligibility rate for African American graduates rose from 2.8% in 1996 to 6.2% in 2003. The rate for Latinos increased from 3.8% to 6.5%. In comparison, 31% of Asian graduates and 16% of White graduates were eligible for UC in 2003. For CSU, the eligibility rates for African American and Latinos also increased, showing a similar pattern.

“Six percent is better than three percent, but these figures show a real need to get students from all backgrounds qualified for our public universities,” said Adrian Griffin, the Commission policy analyst who directed the study. “There are now huge gaps in income between the skilled and the unskilled. We are in danger of becoming more and more of a two-tier society divided by race and income unless we do what is needed to give all high school students a chance to get on the university track.”

The study was conducted by contacting public high schools and asking them to provide transcripts for their graduating class. CSU and UC admission staff reviewed each transcript to see if the courses, grades and test scores would make a student eligible for admission. Nearly 16,000 transcripts were collected from 48 public high schools.

“We took great care that these schools were representative of all California high schools,” said Griffin. “The schools we sampled covered the full range of school performance and other factors related to university-going. We are very confident that we have realistic estimates of the number of students who were qualified to enter CSU and UC.”

Transcripts were collected from schools electronically using a system developed by UC that allowed schools to send transcript data electronically. In past studies, school staff had to select a sample of transcripts from their files and mail them to the Commission. Collecting transcripts electronically reduces the work that has to be done by school staff. Studies can now be done more frequently, allowing CSU and UC to closely monitor the number of public high school graduates who are taking the courses and tests qualifying them for admission.

The California Postsecondary Education Commission advises the Governor and Legislature on higher education policy and fiscal issues. Its primary focus is to ensure that the state’s educational resources are used effectively to provide Californians with postsecondary education opportunities. More information about the Commission and its work can be found at its website at [www.cpec.ca.gov](http://www.cpec.ca.gov).

Information on the University Eligibility Study can be found at [www.cpec.ca.gov/eligibility](http://www.cpec.ca.gov/eligibility).

###